

Gabrielle Hume  
3395 LeValley Road  
Columbiaville, MI 48421  
810.705.0172

I know that your time is very limited today. Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today about HB 4684 and Equine Tourism.

I'll remind you of what Governor Snyder has said. **Michigan's top industry NOW is agriculture.** It's **second** largest industry **is tourism**. But what are your state agencies doing? Do they recognize the impact of their poor planning and decisions? Are they changing their business model to help Michigan recover?

Last year the legislature -- including some of you here today --overwhelmingly passed two bills: HB 4610 and SB 578 -- the "Right to Ride" bills. The law that changed as a result of those bills was watered down and loop-hole riven and did little to actually change what needs to be fixed if Michigan is ever to recapture and increase tourism and specifically, equestrian tourism.

Michigan has one of the highest equine populations ~~but~~ but Michigan is lacking in equestrian tourism trail and campground destinations and state agencies do nothing to promote -- or protect -- this wholesome, family outdoor activity. **I know families that take bicycles, canoes, and fishing gear along with their horses for a week long vacation. They buy fishing licenses and bait. They experience the outdoors and view wildlife from horseback. They sit around a campfire -- not the TV -- at night. No wi-fi at horse camp.**

These families go out to eat, buy groceries, ice, firewood, and in some cases, more hay for their horses (that agriculture link again).

Let's think about the potential revenues that reflect direct sales and sales tax to Michigan. Look at page 2. I took my own information, and that from others I know, to create some charts. Equestrians pay \$20 per night while non-equestrians pay \$15. Some DNR-managed campgrounds charge by the person for horse camp. **Yet, the overwhelming majority of equestrian campgrounds are built by volunteers with donated materials and money.**

Next, the fuel to travel. No economy cars here: we're talking about big trucks hauling big trailers. About 10 miles per gallon of fuel with the weight of 1100 pound horses, hay, water. This could mean several hundred dollars to drive from the Ohio-Indiana border to horse-friendly public land in Michigan. Meals on the road while traveling to our destination. Buying groceries and ice at stores along the way and at the destination. Buying breakfast, lunch, or dinner at our destination and doing laundry on those long trips. Buying hay and firewood from local residents near equestrian campgrounds. Bakery shops, meat stores, specialty tourist outlets.

Personally, for a 3-day weekend for myself with 1 horse driving about 3 hours:

<b>1 person, 1 horse Camping</b>		<b>Stay At Home</b>	
Fuel	\$125	\$10	
Camping fee (3 days)	\$60	0	Pay per DAY, not night
Groceries, propane & incidentals	\$75	\$15	
Meals on the road	\$25	\$25	
Ice to keep food cold	\$10	0	
Campfire Wood	\$15	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$310.00</b>	<b>\$50</b>	<b>Net Spent: \$260</b>

If there are 300 other single adventurers and 6 trips a year (very modest numbers):

$\$260 \times 300 \times 6 = \$468,000$  for 300 single horseback riders; almost One-half million dollars.

How about a group of 4? Fuel will go up because of higher truck-trailer weights (more horses, more hay, more people, more food) but campfire wood will be the same regardless of number of people. Meals on the road increase.

<b>4 person, 4 horse Camping</b>		<b>Stay At Home</b>	
Fuel	\$350	\$25	
Camping fee (3 days)	\$60	0	Pay per DAY, not night
Groceries, propane & incidentals	\$300	\$60	
Meals on the road	\$100	\$100	
Ice to keep food cold	\$20	0	
Campfire Wood	\$15	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$845.00</b>	<b>\$185.00</b>	<b>Net Spent: \$660</b>

**300 "Families", 6 long weekends: that's more than a \$1 Million for in-state tourism.**

What happens when those trips are LENGTHENED to **week-long stays** by visitors from OUT OF STATE?

(Bigger truck & trailer, more fuel burned, and remember those trips to local stores, restaurants, and laundramats.)

<b>4 person, 4 horse Camping, 7 days</b>	
Fuel (\$ spent in state)	\$425
Camping fee (7 days)	\$140
Groceries, propane & incidentals	\$350
Meals on the road	\$160
Ice to keep food cold	\$40
Campfire Wood	\$50
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1165.00</b>

Let's plug in some **POSSIBILITIES**. And not included here are canoe/boat rentals, fishing bait & licenses, etc. And, 12 weeks is very modest. Many horsemen ride from April through November. I only used 3 months for this.

300 Single Riders (6 weekends):	\$ 468,000.00
300 In-state Families (6 weekends):	\$1,188,000.00
200 In-state Families 1 week stays:	\$ 233,000.00
100 Out-State Families per week for 12 weeks:	\$1,398,000.00
<b>POTENTIAL Total over 12 weeks:</b>	<b>\$3,287,000.00</b>

Compare a college football game to the Superbowl. How many people will come from out of state for the college game? How many will come for the Super Bowl? So, who will travel 3 or more hours to ride less than 12 miles of trail at a state park? Not many.

This committee needs to take IMMEDIATE action to restore at least a part of the lost equine revenue. This committee needs to send a clear message to state agencies - specifically, the DNR but also the DEQ and DOT. When rail-trails are put in place and residents want them paved - they don't ASK for 10' pavement - but the MDOT has interpreted US rules and placed that 10' right down the center, which leaves no room for horses.

When the DNR tells you:

- ✦ When the DNR tells you that horses are allowed on all state **forest land** - ask them **where is this state forest land?** (which of course, is different from state parks and different from wildlife management/ state game areas and different from the Pigeon River Country State Forest.) **There is no state forest land south of Clare, MI** and state forest land is not necessarily contiguous - that is, it consists of 40 acres here, 160 acres over there, 80 acres of swamp land over there with major highways cutting through it or adjacent to it. Not very "touristy" and certainly, no campgrounds for out-of-state tourists. Very misleading by the Department.
- ✦ When the DNR tells you of all the horseback riding opportunities in this state - please question them for specifics. The shore-to-shore trail may be over 250 miles - but it's not all on "trails". **That mileage includes county roads** and trails on national forest land. That specific trail is a linear trail - not camping in one location and having loops of varied terrain trails that brings equestrian tourists. Not something that will bring in tourists from out of state.
- ✦ When the DNR tells you there are many **state parks** with horse trails. **Ask them for specifics.** How many miles of trail? Are there showers? Is there running water? State Parks that have camping and horse trails **AVERAGE: Less than 12 miles of trail at 17 state parks and MANY are day-use only!** Are the state parks with horse trails the kinds of places that will bring out-of-state tourists? In other words, are there more than 20 miles of horse trails? By the DNR's own standard for overnight camping - there should be in excess of 20 miles and only 1 state park has more than 20 miles of trail. (Waterloo) See my table on the last page for state park equestrian opportunities.
- ✦ When the DNR tells you that funding is threatened, ask them **HOW DID THAT HAPPEN?** Ask them if it is because of **LAWs or RULEs?** Who was responsible for creating this obstacle to recreational land use?
- ✦ When the DNR tells you horses are not allowed in wildlife management areas, aka - State Game Areas, ask them why not? If the Department says there are "rules" that deny recreation ask them why other states allow horseback riding on federally funded lands? **How can future generations learn about wildlife and caring for land if they do not have the opportunity?** Ask them why they do not allow riding associations to create trails that can be used by hunters, anglers, trappers, hikers, and horsemen?
- ✦ Remind the department that **LAWs** are stronger than "rules" which are issued by the Department. Ask the Department what prevents residents from taking their children and grandchildren on that land to ride during non-hunting seasons.

What the DNR doesn't tell you:

- ✦ What the DNR doesn't tell you how many campgrounds in their list of "equestrian opportunities" are **LOCKED AND GATED** and require 60 days notice for reservation and a permit fee in addition to camping fees. **How can Michigan entice out-of-state tourists if there is no place suitable to camp and ride?** Black Lake FOREST camp. Not used because it's gated & locked and the number to call is not answered. No road address listed for this camp. How do I get there?
- ✦ What the DNR doesn't tell you about the **tens of thousands of dollars of donated materials and manhours by equestrian associations** into state park and forest campgrounds that the state collects camping fees from.
- ✦ What the DNR doesn't tell you how they have **turned over many miles of equestrian trails to other users** who now use those parking areas, campsites, pit toilets, and wells that horse people put in and paid for.
- ✦ What the DNR doesn't tell you the extremely **lengthy planning processes (years and years)** that they use and how frequently plans are never brought to successful completion. (see UMH correspondence)

Leafing through the magazines I provided last week shows many destinations on state and national public land in other states: 150+ miles of trail in the Big South Fork (state park) in Tennessee; 65+ miles of trail at Otter Creek and 100+ miles at Brookfield which are just two of New York's many equestrian camping destinations by travelers from all over the US and Canada. Hundreds and hundreds of miles of trails in Missouri, Florida, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Illinois, Wisconsin, Dakotas, Alabama, Colorado, etc. **TRAILS - NOT ROADS!**

Those magazines were all different and from 2008 – 2011. Did you see any ads in those magazines for Michigan? I didn't. No campground ads, no trail ads, no Real Estate ads, nada.

Equestrians WANT to come to Michigan – equestrians from southern states where it's too hot to ride in the summer. Equestrians from Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Canada that come here to ride in the spring and fall when the weather is isn't warm enough in their states. Riders who spend weeks at a time going from campground to campground; state to state, to ride their horses and view wildlife. Where else east of the Mississippi can we see Elk? And, by the way, wildlife is not threatened by horses because horses are prey animals just like deer and elk are.

**Why are there only a handful of private campgrounds & equestrian trails in Michigan?**

FIRST: Because the existing trail systems are too small with but a few exceptions, and too far north for many others.

SECOND: Because no one will invest in a business, i.e., equestrian lodges and campgrounds, if they are constantly threatened with loss of access to existing trails by the state agency that manages the land. Whether existing trails are closed to horses and left open to other users; paved; or simply closed through random land use orders by the Dept Director. The DEQ needs to also be involved in regard to camp shower facilities, manure collection, wells, etc.

**WHAT IS NEEDED:** To bring equestrians to Michigan

- we need campgrounds that can accommodate large trucks & trailers with trail systems that offer at least 35 miles of trails.
- TRAILS not ROADS. We do NOT need DNR permission to ride on county roads.
- We need a state agency that will cooperate with all public land users and not favor just a few.
- We need incentives for privately operated campgrounds that can access state land without threat of that access arbitrarily closed.
- The volunteer horse organizations are more than willing to donate the time and money for trails and state campgrounds, but there are times when we need to use power tools (chain saws) and 4-wheeled vehicles to take materials to the “back country” to maintain trails in an environmentally friendly way.
- There are frequently times when it is imperative to have access to lakes or streams to water horses along long trails. Many trail groups have installed geo-textile, cement steps, or similar bank protection measures and will continue to do so. These access locations are then used by other recreationists: anglers, canoers, kayakers, bird watchers, and wildlife!

I have documentation dating back to 1978 that shows “planning” between the DNR and Horsemen. Where there were supposed to be 20 miles of trails – that never came to be at many state parks. The area south of Clare, Michigan has NO STATE FORESTS. South of Clare, MI we have to rely on state parks with very short trail systems. Thousands of acres of state game areas – wildlife management areas – stand idle for the many months of the year when there is no large game hunting allowed. These management areas could be opened to volunteer groups to put in trails that then can be used by hunters, trappers, fisherman and hiking enthusiasts during appropriate times of the year.

Instead of signs declaring “NO HORSES ALLOWED”... signs could state the dates horses and hikers ARE allowed. Signs could be placed reminding trail users of proper trail and land use etiquette.

**This state is losing out on TOURISM money and VOLUNTEER donations. It's up to this committee to help to pass laws that will encourage tourism of all sorts. It has to happen NOW. No planning for 3 or 5 or 7 years as has happened in the past. NOW.**

Michigan Horses are an \$8 Billion industry. There are 155,000 horses in Michigan. 80,000 recreational riders. \$1 billion in annual revenue. It could be bigger. Michigan has lost equine tourism in many ways. Loss of horse racing, lack of fairgrounds and campgrounds, loss of horse breeding farms, and other equine facilities. Horses are grown and raised in Michigan- they require care and feeding 365 day a year – not like a bicycle, ATV, or canoe. Horses eat Michigan grown agricultural products and they require veterinarians, dentists, and horseshoers (farriers) trained at Michigan schools and universities. Barns and fencing. US made trucks and trailers.

	State Park Trail / Camp	Miles	Camping Yes/No
1	Brighton	18	Yes
2	Hadley/Ortonville	9	Yes
3	Highland Rec	13	Yes
4	Ionia	15	Yes
5	Pontiac Lake	17	Yes
6	Waterloo	25	Yes
7	Bass River	6	No
8	Fort Custer	12	No
9	Hoefl (Thompsons Harbor)	6	No
10	Kal-Haven Trail	11	No
11	Lakeland Trail	10	No
12	Maybury	11	No
13	Pickney	8	No
14	Polly Ann Trail	7	No
15	Proud Lake	9	No
16	Rose Lake	10	No
17	Sleepy Hollow	9	No
	Total State Park Trail Miles:	196	Average: 11.5